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SWAMPSCOTT CONFERENCE

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS: SOME ASPECTS OF LIBRARY PROGRESS

By ALICE S. TYLER, *Director, Western Reserve University Library School, Cleveland, Ohio*

Librarianship is an ancient and honorable profession and comes to us as a noble heritage from the past, rooted in scholarship and learning. We should, with pride, do homage to those whose honored names are associated with the care and preservation of precious manuscripts and documents, and later with printed material, preserving and transmitting the recorded thoughts and aspirations of past generations to the service of the present.

When a new world and a new era became established upon the American continent, conditions and requirements arose unlike those of any previous country or age. The great experiment in democracy was undertaken. The fundamental conception has broadened and strengthened as new experiences have enlarged the democratic ideal, but we recognize that the underlying principle of the new order was universal intelligence. Into this new land, with its conditions absolutely unlike those of the home land, the pioneers had brought a belief in education and in libraries; for we learn that those who came on the Mayflower brought libraries quite out of proportion to their other worldly goods. Miles Standish, for example, had fifty volumes, including Caesar's Commentaries on the Gallic War, as we learn from "The Courtship." Of the pioneers the inventory of whose estates is preserved in the Old Colony records, none had less than one pound value in books and eleven had five pounds or more, and money was worth five times as much then as now. Elder Brewster had four hundred volumes, including works of Bacon and Milton, and not a few plays; Governor Bradford had eighty volumes, and John Miles had fifty pounds worth. It is also noted that John

Harvard, who immortalized himself by leaving his property and his name to the little collegiate school in Cambridge, had a library of three hundred volumes.

It was inevitable that the founding of public collections of books should be fostered by such men and their descendants and naturally these libraries have taken on characteristics and methods quite unlike those of older countries with different standards and requirements. Libraries are no longer for a limited and selected group. They must be for everyone. The American library from the nature of the governmental experiment has opened wide its doors to all. For this reason we have developed in this country a profession new in many aspects, springing from the old,—a newness which is the adaptation of books and information to modern democratic needs. All recognize that scholarship and research are fundamental and essential to sound library progress, but in addition there is the distinctive responsibility for meeting the needs and requirements of the new age and the new state.

Those who have to do with book distribution in this country—not only librarians, but authors, literary workers, publishers and booksellers—recognize the service books should render to the varied conditions of American life. The boundless field of the universal appeal of literature, more or less intangible, is the common interest of all and no one institution or organization can compass it, though the library has an essential and important part. To reach, by means of the printed page, the minds and thought of all who can read—while the schools face the task of reducing the appalling number of the illiterate—is task

enough for the united purpose and energy of all forward-looking people who have personal contact with books in any relation. Here is a field for co-operation—definite, practical and immediate—to project *the book* with its potential service upon the attention and thought of an unawakened people, by means of active and convincing methods, such as are utilized by other world activities and agencies which appeal to an intelligent response.

While sharing in this general responsibility the Library has a distinctive contribution to make as a public institution, far beyond that of other groups who are concerned in book distribution. It has been created by society for its own service, supported by public funds. It is obligated to provide for the community the aids and encouragements for mental and intellectual health and growth, in as definite and responsible manner as the health and welfare departments, municipal and state, are obligated to provide for physical health and well-being and the essential needs of pure food and water. The mental and spiritual needs of a community must not yield in importance to the material. A recent *Book Bulletin* of the Toronto Library admirably says "It is the public library which conserves and develops the public taste. Without it there is comparatively little protection in any community against the cheap, the common, the trashy in literature. Its very catholicity in taste and democracy in administration make it the representative public social institution of any community."

In accepting this, there is the added thought that the library may well be considered the clearing house of ideas for the community. It has been deemed essential that books should be made freely available, not primarily to make one's business more effective, though that is important and desirable,—but to make the individual more effective in his personal life. To foster idealism and to strengthen the struggling aspirations of the human spirit is the very essence of the library's service as an in-

stitution. In the light of the present day, what higher service can be rendered?

The tide of distractions and thoughtless pursuit of entertainment and amusement seem often times almost overwhelming. Has the library as an institution any constructive program to turn this tide? If the tendency of the average person is to follow the easiest way of receiving mental impression through pictures, glaring headlines or blatant propaganda, should the library present a program of activity to arrest the attention of the careless and indifferent?

Can the library become vocal and active in stimulating discussion of books that arouse thought? Is there not a distinct service to be rendered not only in placing on our shelves, but publicly discussing, books on the great questions of public life and affairs? In short, how may the American public library be utilized for the general good? And how may the college and university libraries with their matchless opportunities for reaching picked groups of young men and women, utilize these opportunities by inspiring in these young people a real feeling for books and reading, aside from the lecture room task, which they may carry with them into life's activities?

We believe in the compelling power of books to draw to them those for whom books have a message; we believe in the library as an essential factor in democracy; we believe in the power of the library's influence because it responds to a voluntary and not a compulsory educational contact. It has been said that "democratic consciousness is that state of mind which takes delight in, and has confidence in people rather than things." Have librarians reached this state of "democratic consciousness" in their library service? Has the library become socially conscious as an institution?

We find the answer in the realization of the service of the modern public library and the specialized service of the many business and special libraries. And most of all when we recall the historic library

service to our soldiers and sailors during the Great War.

It has been said that there is inherent in the intangible medium with which we deal—thought recorded in books—an obstacle to an active and dynamic projection of library service from the institutional point of view. Some have even suggested that we should recognize the passive and subsidiary nature of our service and that the library accept a secondary and not seek a primary place in the great scheme of general education—books and the library being the handmaid of the schools and other aggressive educational forces.

This view is probably held by some writers of books on sociology and social institutions, for it is rare indeed that we find the library, as a public institution with both an educational and a social purpose, included in such books. Doubtless such authors have received generous aid from the libraries in the preparation of their books, but with the thought that the service of the library is essentially for the scholar and the student. They have not realized the obligations and services of the institution to the community or institution supporting it. Have we not been remiss in failing to bring this to their attention?

We do not of course accept this secondary view of our place in the educational scheme, hence it is of concern to us that a clearer conception of the institutional service of the library shall be more frequently and clearly presented and that discrimination be made in our own minds and in that of others, between the service of books to individuals in their pervading and intangible influences, which we share with others who are concerned with book distribution, and the specific and professional sense in which the organized and definite obligation is ours to stimulate, direct and extend the use of books in the service of every citizen.

The school, the church, the theater and the newspaper share with the library in influencing public thought and action; but the appeal of the library is not only to the individual but also a group appeal and is

hence more vital and significant as it not only seeks the individual with the message of the book in a special and personal way, but has equally in view the welfare of the entire community.

One after another certain achievements have been realized by the libraries and in their realization milestones have been set up in the slow stages of progress—tax support, free access to books, state responsibility for library extension, the library the heart of university life, book service to the home by means of neighborhood library or home delivery, the work with children and schools, the business and research library, the rural book service—only to push forward with the goal still ahead and with an ardent belief in the results accomplished and the greater yet to be.

Those who participate in a great social movement always picture an ultimate triumph in which the goal is reached and their labors ended. The "destructive myth" of certain revolutionist philosophers has provided no project for future social organization after the tremendous finality of their effort is accomplished. In common with those who hold higher conceptions of education, are we not seeking to banish ignorance and create a literate, thinking world of universal intelligence? The unattainable, some may say—possibly a creative or constructive myth—but after all an inspiring aim, and if the seemingly impossible should come to pass, the human imagination cannot picture the beauty, joy and unlimited growth and accomplishments of the human soul untrammelled by ignorance, blindness and superstition.

Meantime our feet are upon the earth, our immediate tasks are practical and possible of accomplishment and through united effort our progress is sure. In our common purposes and ideals we can more effectively labor through the united efforts of our great national organization which gives us courage, force and strength.

It seems necessary to reiterate the fact that organizations cannot, if growing and vital, remain unchanged. There must be

new and varied forms of activity adapted to the rising need which express the progressive spirit of man.

The American Library Association is not an exception. If we should be tempted to say, because of our affection for the organization, that the methods and ideals which were so well conceived in those early years should remain unchanged, let us remember that the last twenty-five years, yes, the last decade, has produced a new world and we must adapt our methods and plans to these urgent needs.

As a group of educational workers with a social purpose, American librarians have, through the American Library Association, for the past forty-five years, sought by acquaintance and exchange of views and by united effort, to "promote the welfare of libraries in America."

This collective endeavor has been permeated through these years by a spirit of service and good will which is the "soul of collective endeavor."

It may be truthfully said that the American Library Association has mastered new obligations as they have come to it in the progress of events and acquitted itself, during the momentous and historic period of the war, by meeting a tremendous patriotic obligation in a manner that could not possibly have been anticipated by those who created the organization.

With the return to somewhat normal conditions there is need of adaptation to post-war needs. Certain weaknesses in our organization have been revealed by both war and post-war experiences. To meet new needs and obligations, amending the constitution seems to be the first step taken by most organizations. This is doubtless essential. There are, however, some possibilities in meeting certain needs that may be suggested with our organization as it is, or in process of adjustments.

It seems unnecessary to emphasize the difficulties that are inherent in national organizations, with members widely scattered, to carry on consecutive or continuous work or investigation. Your attention

has been called during the year to the vague and undefined status of committees in the American Library Association and although much valuable and resultful work has been done by committees in the past, it is most desirable that a more definite program shall be worked out for committee activities. For this reason the American Library Association Council has created a committee to study the subject and report at a meeting during this Conference. There should be, without doubt, a correlation of the work of a committee on a given subject with the work of a section on the same subject, and the query arises as to whether both are needed. There is, too, the matter of over-lapping committees and the utilization of committee findings in continuity of effort. Does not the creation of a section mean that a considerable group of librarians have a continued interest in that phase of library activity in providing for annual discussion and conference? In which case might it not include all of the functions of a standing committee? To illustrate, might not all who are especially concerned as to professional preparation concentrate effort in the Professional Training Section, with sub-committees in the section on various types of training?

Doubtless most of us have many times felt helpless over our inability to find specific and accurate data regarding important items in library service and library extension. We cannot much longer indulge in "glittering generalities" regarding library problems and library accomplishments. What do we *know* as to the effect of this, or the results of that activity? What ends have been accomplished? What are the most direct and inexpensive means? And has there been recorded data in a sufficient number of instances for us to know with certainty what may properly be expected as a result of certain expenditures of effort or of money?

Have we been ready to measure our activities by adapted and modified standards of measurements such as are applied

in industrial, commercial and school work? It is but a few years ago that many teachers scorned the dreams of a few that the processes of school work should be scientifically measured. They said, as do some of us now, that such work was intangible and the processes could not be measured by the rule and yard stick. While this is true of the final results of education as manifested in character and personality, it has been shown that methods and processes by which such results are gained in the class room can be measured. Is it not time that we should be seeking to know what certain library activities really mean in measured terms?

Would it be feasible for the sections of the American Library Association to become our "experiment stations?" Where could we turn for a "picked group" better adapted than the Lending Section to undertake, through the co-operation of a score or less librarians, time, fatigue and motion studies of loan desk processes with detailed and continuous record for a considerable period?

There is in the Catalog Section an opportunity similar to that of the Lending Section to make a similar study of time and motion in their relations to department organization.

What other group could attempt with such understanding and technical knowledge as the Children's Librarians Section, a study of the reactions of children to various types of literature, the handicaps of the printed page for those who find the mechanics of reading difficult, the physical make-up and size of type used in children's books, with a selected group of children's librarians co-operating and with a scientific schedule upon which to work.

These suffice to suggest a method by which at least a beginning might be made in securing and assembling sufficient data upon which to base accurate statements from which conclusions might be drawn.

Undoubtedly more resultful work could be accomplished by the sections if a simple organization of each section should be made, whereby continuity would be se-

cured for plans and policies. An Executive Committee of five, one selected each year for a period of five years, would probably provide this, the chairman of the section to be named by the committee either from their own number or from the membership of the section.

A general need for timely and accurate library statistics with sufficient details upon which statements can be based and conclusions drawn, is recognized by the Committee on Library Administration in its efforts. Here, indeed, was disclosed one of our greatest needs during the trying periods of war service and publicity. We have been favored by the willingness of the U. S. Bureau of Education in the past to gather and publish library statistics, but the schedule of the items has been somewhat unresponsive to our needs and the results have not always given us the facts so much needed to meet the crucial question of cost of operation, tax maintenance, and the ultimate "acid test," of the whole question of a tax-supported library service, viz: what proportion of the people are really being served and at what cost? The Committee on Federal and State Relations is co-operating with the Bureau in securing a more comprehensive schedule, but when such statistics are ascertained we are in need of an analysis of the findings, for it is not collecting material but organizing it after collection, that will give us the convincing facts. A library "actuary," (to borrow a word from the insurance world) for the American Library Association, who would translate figures into living realities, could produce conclusive arguments for library extension—the vital need—which comprehends in its far-reaching program the ultimate goal of making books freely and easily accessible to every person. The Survey Committee of Five in its plans for securing information as to the activities and methods now existing, will reveal to us the vast field yet to be developed by the American library system. Some prospects are clearly visible and many we do not see,

just around the bend of the road as we steadily advance. It should stir our imaginations and arouse our flagging energies to feel that in the united purpose of this organization higher levels are being attained,

the individual worker is given courage for the daily task, and that all are contributing in greater or less degree to the tremendous educational task of the day and hour—a richer, fuller individual life for every one.

PAPERS PRESENTED AT SWAMPSCOTT CONFERENCE BUT PRINTED ELSEWHERE

The following timely papers appearing in the library periodicals, which are available in nearly all libraries, are not reprinted here:

The city's leadership in book distribution, by Arthur E. Bostwick, librarian, St. Louis Public Library. *Library Journal*, July 1, 1921, pp. 589-593.

The rural library and rural life, by Kenyon L. Butterfield, president, Massachusetts Agricultural College. *New York Libraries*, August, 1921, pp. 230-234.

The new temper of the reading public, by Glenn Frank, editor, *The Century Magazine*. *Publishers' Weekly*, August 13, 1921, pp. 495-497.

Ferments and facts, by Alfred Harcourt, of Harcourt, Brace and Company. *Publishers' Weekly*, September 10, 1921, pp. 715-717.

The nation's fiction appetite, by Herbert F. Jenkins, of Little Brown and Company. *Publishers Weekly*, September 24, 1921, pp. 973-975.

The prophet and the poet, by Dallas Lore Sharp, covered approximately the same points as his article, *Education for authority*, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1921, pp. 13-21.

Chapter from the story of a small library, by Elizabeth W. Blackall, librarian, Oneonto Public Library. *New York Libraries*, August, 1921, pp. 236-240.

Adventures among catalogs, by Louise Fargo Brown, Vassar College. *Public Libraries*, July, 1921, pp. 371-374.

Making the dry side of cataloging interesting, by Frances Rathbone Coe, Massachusetts State Library. *Public Libraries*, July, 1921, pp. 367-370.

Circulation short cuts, by Grace B. Finney, Washington Public Library. *Public Libraries*, October, 1921, pp. 463-466.

The future of the A. A. L. L., by Frederick

C. Hicks, president, American Association Law Libraries. *Library Journal*, July 1, 1921, pp. 593-595.

A librarian's point of view, by Clara Whitehill Hunt, Brooklyn Public Library. *Publishers' Weekly*, July 9, 1921, pp. 69-71.

Co-operation between public and special libraries, by Dorsey W. Hyde, Jr., president, Special Libraries Association. *Library Journal*, June 1, 1921, pp. 487-489.

A book-seller's point of view, by Bertha E. Mahony, director, The Bookshop for Boys and Girls. *Publishers' Weekly*, October 22, 1921.

The objects of cataloging, by Archibald Cary Coolidge, director, Harvard University Library. *Library Journal*, September 15, 1921, pp. 735-739.

Relationship between the central station of a county library and its branches, by Sabra L. Nason, librarian, Umatilla County Public Library. *Illinois Libraries*, October, 1921.

Can librarians read, by Mary Prescott Parsons, librarian, Morristown Public Library. *Popular Educator*, November, 1921.

The children's librarian of today and tomorrow, by Effie L. Power, Cleveland Public Library. *Library Journal*, August, 1921, pp. 633-636.

What the school expects of the school librarian, by Sherman Williams, chief of School Libraries Division, New York State. *New York Libraries*, August, 1921, pp. 240-242.

They also serve, by George H. Tripp, librarian, New Bedford Public Library. Will be published in a future number of *Public Libraries*.

Some present day problems in book selection, by Elva S. Smith, Carnegie Library, Pittsburgh. *Primary Education*, November, 1921, *Public Libraries*, November, 1921.